

Message

From: Restivo, Angela [Restivo.Angela@epa.gov]
Sent: 6/3/2021 1:13:16 PM
To: Mistry, Jatin [Mistry.Jatin@epa.gov]; Slane, Robert [Slane.Robert@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Article: Humphrey residents still dealing with brown water, pushing for solutions

FYI

From: Durant, Jennah <Durant.Jennah@epa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, June 3, 2021 8:07 AM
To: Smalley, Bryant <smalley.bryant@epa.gov>; Brown, Jamesr <brown.jamesr@epa.gov>; Restivo, Angela <Restivo.Angela@epa.gov>
Subject: Article: Humphrey residents still dealing with brown water, pushing for solutions

FYI: <https://katv.com/news/local/humphrey-residents-continue-to-deal-with-brown-water-issues-pushing-for-solutions>

Humphrey residents still dealing with brown water, pushing for solutions

by Parris Kane

Wednesday, June 2nd 2021

LITTLE ROCK (KATV) — A small town 10 miles outside of Stuttgart has been dealing with brown water issues for the last decade, but residents say the problem has only gotten worse in the last two years.

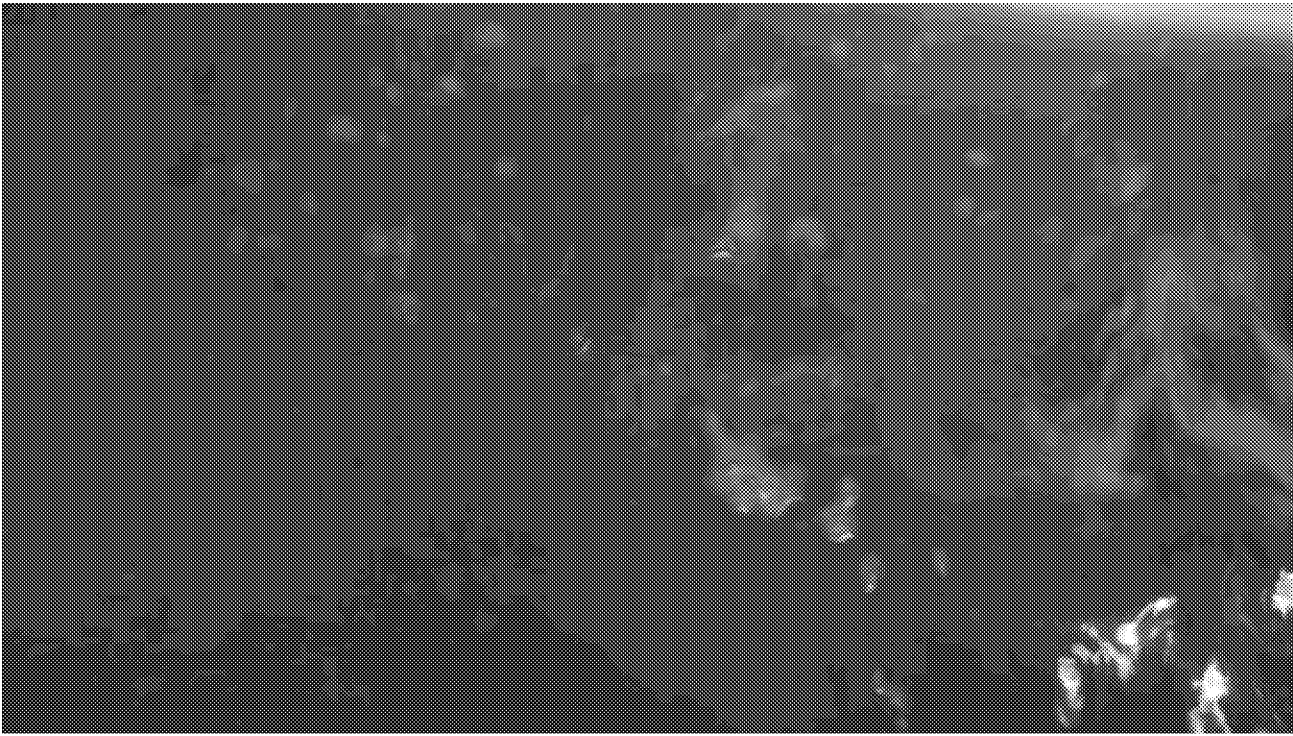
The Arkansas Department of Health has been actively checking on the water in Humphrey and officials say there are adequate disinfection levels in the water to ensure bacteriological safety.

KATV traveled to Humphrey last Tuesday and spoke to residents as well as the town's mayor, Cleveland Hatch. They all agreed that they don't feel comfortable drinking the water and would not advise anyone else to either. In fact, residents say they don't even allow their dogs to drink the water, they can't wash clothes with it, they can't cook with it and they even feel dirty bathing in it.

Instead, they're paying monthly bills for water they can't use and spending hundreds of dollars a month on bottled water.

According to the ADH, the Humphrey well contains large amounts of iron. Although the water treatment plant, Humphrey Waterworks, is designed to remove the iron, the ADH said it's dependent upon correct chemical feeds and the proper backwashing of filters.

District 4 Engineer Jake Chatman has been making frequent visits to the town to try and help the water operator correct the chemical feeds and backwash filters effectively. However, residents say they haven't seen significant improvement over the last several weeks.



Humphrey bath water as of late May 2021 (Photo: Brandi McDermott)

Jeff Stone, director of the Arkansas Department of Health Drinking Water Program, said after their May 26 visit the city was advised to bring in their manufacturer representative to evaluate the condition of their filters. The report stated that during the site visit, it was noted that “some of the filter media washed out of the filters during the backwashing process,” and they believe it’s “causing shortened filter runs and elevated concentrations of iron and manganese in the finished water.”

“I believe they’re following up on that and contacting a manufacturer’s rep to make sure their filters are in an adequate condition to do a good job,” Stone said.

Stone said the ADH plans to be on-site when the rep comes out and assist if needed.

“If it needs maintenance to be performed at it, hopefully those representatives can give them good input on where to best spend their money on their maintenance needs,” Stone said.

The May 26 report said they discussed the treatment plant, tested the water for iron and manganese, and collected bacteriological samples. They intended to observe a backwash of the filters, but an issue at the plant the night before prevented the storage tank from filling.

The report also said two bacteriological samples were collected, and the results for both were “total coliform and E. coli absent.”

Stone said the treatment plant is appropriate for the task of removing the iron. However, He said iron is not identified as a health concern that needs to be regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

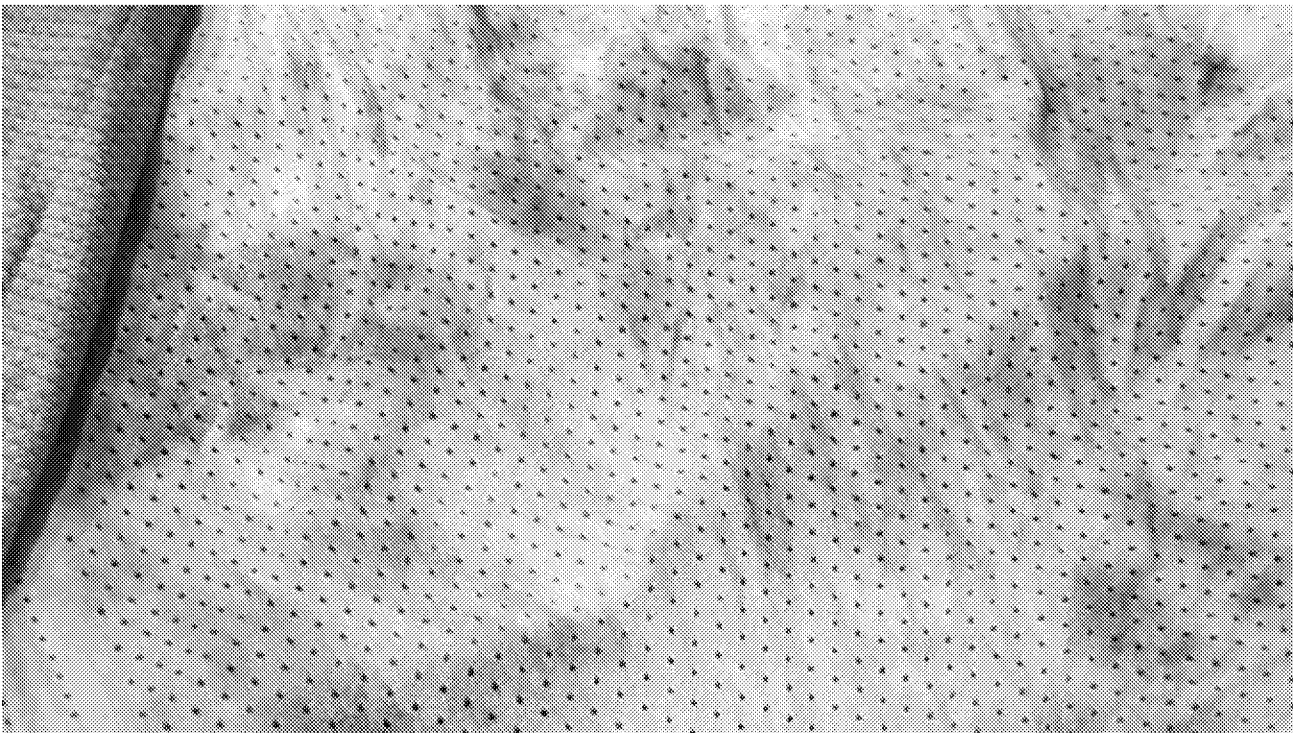
“Iron in the water is a nuisance, and for it to be usable for people without being a nuisance, the iron needs to be removed,” He said.

When asked if he himself would drink the water in Humphrey, Stone said, “I would try to make sure that I either flushed or obtained bottled water that would be more pleasant to taste. I do know the water is disinfected, but with brown iron, rusted iron in the water, it is a problem.”

While the ADH will continue to assist as long as they’re needed, Stone said the city is responsible for maintenance.

“If they need to seek out funding from the state or federal sources, they can pursue that for financial assistance, but they’re the owner and they need to pursue the maintenance that they need to provide the water that’s acceptable,” Stone said.

As far as the hundreds of dollars the residents are spending on bottled water, trips to the laundromat, replacing clothes that have been ruined and paying their water bill, Stone wasn’t aware of any assistance available to the public.



Stained clothes after washing in Humphrey washing machine. (Photo: Brandi McDermott)

The ADH health held a subcommittee hearing for Humphrey Waterworks back in March for a number of violations. The violations include failing to employ a licensed water operator, not always submitting required sampling, and not always providing the proper feed of chemicals necessary to remove iron.

The committee made recommendations that Humphrey hire a licensed water operator, feed the proper amount of chemicals needed to remove iron, and in lieu of fines, spend \$1,000 towards training for the current employee that is not currently licensed.

Last week, mayor Hatch said the town's sole Humphrey Waterworks employee has since been certified.

Those recommendations of the subcommittee will be presented to the full board of health in July for their consideration, and the city of Humphrey will be able to attend.

Tuesday, the Region 6 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), sent a letter to mayor Hatch—notifying him of violations against the Safe Drinking Water Act and the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations.

The letter also states the EPA was informed by the ADH that Humphrey Waterworks failed to provide public notice for:

1. Failure to maintain a qualified, licensed water operator
2. Failure to measure disinfectant chlorine residuals and/or the form documenting the residuals was not submitted for Jan. 2021
3. Failure to collect and submit monthly bacteriological Samples
4. Failure to submit monthly bacteriological monitoring and operations reports for Jan. 2021

The mayor has the opportunity to tell the EPA about any further information that should be considered regarding the violations within the next 14 days. KATV called Hatch for a response to the letter but no response has been received.

“I don't think anybody wants to put financial penalties on a poor community,” Stone said. “I believe everybody, including EPA wants to assist them but that letter is a reminder that these are federal requirements that are involved and must be met.”